

IB Language and Literature – Shaping and communicating identity: Language and the individual

Date:	Leaders:	Essay:
10/2	Ms. Gillette	"The Ugly Tourist," Jamaica Kincaid
10/4		Work with partner to plan for presentation
10/7		"Day Language Came into my Life," Helen Keller (HL) "On Being a Cripple," Nancy Mairs (HL) "Black Men and Public Spaces," Brent Staples (SL)
10/9		"Superman and Me," Sherman Alexie (SL) "Dumpster Diving," Lars Eighner (HL)
10/11		"How It Feels to be Colored Me," Zora Neale Hurston (HL)
10/14		"On Being..." rough draft – roundtable feedback Day 1
10/16		NO CLASS - PSAT day/early dismissal
10/18		"On Being..." roundtable feedback Day 2
10/21		"On Being..." essay due

Discussion Facilitators:

- In advance of the date of discussion, fill out one copy of the required worksheet highlighting different writing choices made by the author.
- Based on your insights, write open-ended questions to stimulate a discussion.
- Isolate at least one specific sentence or passage that demonstrates this writer's particular style for close textual analysis at some point during discussion.
- On your assigned date, you will be graded on your ability to **begin discussion with an 'activator'** (initial starting point for discussion), **focus the discussion on remarkable rhetorical choices** within the text, and **invite participation from all students**. Discussion should last between 20 and 25 minutes.
- Being absent from school on the assigned day will earn a significant penalty or a zero for an individual's possible grade, depending on circumstances.
- Submit your completed worksheet and open-ended questions at the conclusion of your discussion.

Rest of the class:

- Write one question and one comment to demonstrate your thoughtful reading. (I will be checking/collecting sporadically.)
- TAKE PART in the discussion.

On days when you are not presenting, work on your "On Being..." personal essay.

"On Being..."

When a person categorizes another as a "cripple" or "tourist" or "a black man" or "a dumpster diver" et cetera, powerful implications accompany that definition. A culturally shared understanding of the category is assumed to be out there, a notion, not necessarily true, of what it means to be someone associated with that category. And yet this categorization is not the whole story; that belongs to the individual, not the group.

Your task: to write a personal essay exploring what it means to be _____.

Fill in the blank with a word or phrase you are willing to explore about your own personal identity. Gather information from your own knowledge and experience, then, develop a perspective on your subject so that you can write about it.

Identify an audience for your writing; consider the assumptions and beliefs, both obvious and subtle, this audience might have about the category of human identity you've identified yourself as part of.

Illustrate your definition with vignettes, anecdotes, and scenes that exemplify / fortify your notion about what being someone who is "X" involves. Use any of the Norton discussion series as models. Avoid generalizing.

A conference and serious revision is required.

"Soybeans" by Thomas Alan Orr

The October air was warm and musky, blowing
Over brown fields, heavy with the fragrance
Of freshly combined beans, the breath of harvest.

He was pulling a truckload onto the scales
At the elevator near the rail siding north of town
When a big Cadillac drove up. A man stepped out,
Wearing a three-piece suit and a gold pinky ring.
The man said he had just invested a hundred grand
In soybeans and wanted to see what they looked like.

The farmer stared at the man and was quiet, reaching
For the tobacco in the rear pocket of his jeans,
Where he wore his only ring, a threadbare circle
rubbed

By working cans of dip and long hours on the backside
Of a hundred acre run. He scooped up a handful
Of small white beans, the pearls of the prairie, saying:

Soybeans look like a foot of water on the field in April
When you're ready to plant and can't get in;
Like three kids at the kitchen table
Eating macaroni and cheese five nights in a row,
Or like a broken part on the combine when
Your credit with the implement dealer is nearly
tapped.

Soybeans look like prayers bouncing off the ceiling
When prices on the Chicago grain market start to
drop;
Or like your old man's tears when you tell him
How much the land might bring for subdivisions.
Soybeans look like the first good night of sleep in
weeks
When you unload at the elevator and the kids get
Christmas.

He spat a little juice on the tire of the Cadillac,
Laughing despite himself and saying to the man:
Now maybe you can tell me what a hundred grand
looks like.

Scoring guide for “On Being...” narrative

9 Narratives meet the criteria for those that are scored an 8 and, in addition, are especially sophisticated in their control of language or structure. Writing is especially polished and possesses distinctive personal voice; elements of the narrative work together to create a unified, powerful whole.

8 EFFECTIVE These successful personal narratives demonstrate original thinking to convincingly portray the realities of “being” a certain thing. Successful attempts are made to “bridge the gap” with the audience. Narratives are appropriately developed using action, dialogue, internal reflection, and/or other well-selected details emphasizing ‘showing’ over ‘telling’, painting a satisfying and original portrait. Writing demonstrates stylistic maturity by an effective command of sentence structure, diction, and organization emphasizing effective voice. The work is carefully prepared with no/few distracting errors.

7 Essays meet the criteria for those that are scored a 6 but are distinguished by more mature prose style or development of voice.

6 ADEQUATE These adequate narratives demonstrate adequate original thinking to portray the realities of “being” a certain thing, but may feel more formulaic or conventional. Deliberate attempts are made to “bridge the gap” with the audience. Although occasional lapses in syntax and diction may be present, the writing demonstrates sufficient control of the elements of composition to present the writer’s ideas clearly. The narrative has been prepared with necessary attention to the demands of the assignment.

5 These narratives contain potential in portraying the realities of “being” something, but the result is limited, inconsistent, or uneven. The writing may contain lapses in diction or syntax, but it usually conveys the student’s ideas adequately.

4 and lower INADEQUATE These unsuccessful papers inadequately capture the reality of “being” a certain thing through oversimplification, incomplete development, or ineffective choices. Audience does not factor into the presentation. The prose reveals weaknesses in writing, such as lack of development or organization, grammatical problems, or a lack of control.

2 and lower LITTLE SUCCESS These ineffective papers demonstrate little success in capturing the realities of “being” a certain thing. These papers may be poorly written on several counts, featuring problems such as thin development, insufficient elaboration, or incoherence.

The prose suggests immature control of writing and/or superficial treatment of the assignment.